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ABSTRACT

This study examined the attitudes of women academics in the field of education regarding institutional factors that they associate with their publishing productivity. Twenty-three senior-level faculty women in education participated in semi-structured interviews and supplied copies of their curriculum vitae. Of these, 18 qualified as being highly productive scholars by virtue of having 20 or more refereed publications in all or 5 or more refereed publications in the last 2 years. Participants used a range of adjectives to describe the contribution of their universities to their publishing productivity. Only three described their departmental environments as highly supportive, while the remainder used adjectives that ranged from "hostile" to "null." Participants identified three elements of the institution as supportive of maintaining a high level of scholarly productivity: the formal and informal institutional reward structure, work assignment, and opportunities for collegial exchange. Heavy teaching and advising responsibilities were listed uniformly as inhibitors of scholarly writing, as were high expectations for service. It was concluded that the participants' perception that institutional factors contributed little to their publishing productivity may reflect the primacy of collegial networks in sustaining commitment to scholarly research and writing. (Contains 18 references.) (MDM)

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Institutional Factors Women Academics Perceive to be Associated With Their Publishing Productivity

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Abstract

This paper reports findings about institutional factors that women academics in the field of education associate with their publishing productivity. While a reward structure that emphasized research publications was associated with initiating a commitment to writing, a department with a "writing culture" was critical to sustaining it.

Institutional Factors Women Academics Perceive to be Associated With Their Publishing Productivity

Number of scholarly publications is frequently used to assess both the level of research performance or productivity and the impact or quality of that output (Creswell, 1985; Ramsden, 1994). For faculty members, the quantity and quality of the publication record is strongly associated with salary and rank, as well as with visibility in the profession (Fox, 1985). Those with the strongest publication records shape knowledge production in the academic discipline and through their role on the editorial boards of professional journals also often serve as "gate-keepers" to publication outlets.

Although partially explained by the location of the majority of women faculty in institutions that do not place a premium on research, sex differences in scholarly productivity are widely documented (Cole & Zuckerman, 1984; Creswell, 1985; Finkelstein, 1984). Fox (1985) estimated that men publish almost twice as many articles as women. SELF CITE (1994) noted the percentage of female first authors ranged from 29 to 41 percent in four core journals in higher education. Lower levels of scholarly productivity is offered as one of the explanations for the lower status of women in higher education, as reflected by the concentration of women academics in less prestigious institutions and among the less senior ranks (Finkelstein, 1984). Lower publication rates provide women with less voice in the intellectual discourse that shapes a discipline

(Fox, 1985).

Institutional location is one of the major factors offered to explain scholarly productivity (Blackburn, Behymer, & Hall, 1978; Fox, 1985). The most productive scholarly writers are generally senior-level faculty with teaching positions in graduate programs at research institutions. Fox (1985) noted that while the literature consistently shows the connection between environmental location and scholarly productivity, it has failed to explain how the work environment supports or impedes publishing.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the institutional factors that female academics with strong publication records associate with their ability to productive as scholarly writers. In the context of this paper, scholarly productivity and publishing productivity are both used to refer to the quantity of scholarly publications. Scholarly productivity is the conventional term used in the literature to refer to publishing output, even though it is recognized that there are many other elements of faculty productivity.

An understanding of how women perceive the factors associated with their publishing productivity may contribute to our ability to enhance women's participation in the publication process and may help practitioners, as well as academics, appreciate the structural factors that are required to initiate and sustain a research and writing agenda.

The Literature About Sex Differences in Scholarly Productivity

Sex differences in scholarly productivity were recognized in comprehensive reviews of the literature published in the mid 1980s by Creswell (1985), Finkelstein (1984), and Fox (1985). Much of the research about long-term sex differences in productivity, such as the work of Cole and Singer (1991) and Long (1990), have utilized samples of academics in the sciences. Comparatively little has been published about the characteristics of frequent contributors to the literature in higher education (Hunter & Kuh, 1987). Hunter (1986) and Hunter and Kuh (1987) utilized interview data from female faculty members and administrators who were characterized as prolific contributors to the literature in higher education but the implications of their findings are limited because of the small size of the sample and the role of role of institutional factors in productivity were not pursued in detail.

With the exception of Hunter (1986) where a comparison group was not used, feminist phase theory would characterize the literature about sex differences in scholarly productivity as overwhelmingly bi-focal (Tetreault, 1985; Twombly, 1991) by virtue of its focus on comparing men and women. Such research is challenged because of the suggestion of universal distinctions between men and women, as well as the failure to portray the diversity of women's experiences (Twombly, 1991). Feminist scholarship is characterized, on the other hand, by its focus on the "nature of women's experiences as it is expressed by women" (Twombly, 1991, p. 13) without necessarily comparing it to the

experience of men. This is the rationale for why a comparison group of men is not used in this study.

Methods

Research Design

This project stemmed from the desire to describe how highly productive female academics explained the contribution of institutional factors to their scholarly writing. As with the work by Hunter and Kuh (1987) about prolific contributors to the literature in higher education, no comparison group is used. Conclusions were not sought to determine the difference between high and low female producers or to identify similarities and differences between male and female academics with strong publication records. The purpose, instead, is to describe how a convenience sample of female academics who are among the small group who can be classified as highly productive described their experiences. The researchers believed that the faculty members' perspectives and the context of their thoughts and feelings about the factors that influenced their ability to develop a strong publication record were best identified through qualitative research methods. These methods seek to understand how people make meaning of their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Sample

Between the summer of 1994 and the spring of 1995, twenty-nine, female faculty members and practitioners primarily in higher

education and student affairs from 15 universities were invited to participate in a study about the factors that support or inhibit scholarly writing and publication. Initial opportunity sampling was followed by snowball sampling (Delamont, 1992). The research project began during the summer of 1994 with the extension of an invitation to participate in an interview extended to all tenured female faculty members in the College of Education at a research university in the Southeast. That was followed in the fall of 1994, with invitations to all tenured, female faculty members in higher education or counseling and student personal programs and site visits to one research university and one doctorate-granting institution in the Mid-Atlantic area. The remaining participants were identified through a nomination process.

Twenty-three, senior-level faculty women, including two women of color, participated in an individual interview and supplied a copy of their curriculum vitae. Of these, 18 qualified as being highly productive scholarly writers by virtue of having 20 or more refereed publications or five or more refereed publications in the last two years. This definition of scholarly productivity is similar to the one utilized in a multiple institution study of social scientist conducted by Astin and Davis (1985). Counting all refereed publications provides a measure of productivity as a scholarly writer, while a productivity measure that is based exclusively on the quantity of journal articles is more closely associated with research productivity.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews. One or both of the researchers conducted semi-structured, individual interviews that lasted from one to one and one-half hours in length. Permission was received to tape record the interviews and confidentiality of the data was assured. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in full.

Participants were asked to discuss how four factors contributed to or inhibited her ability to do scholarly writing. These were: (a) the doctoral program, b) departmental or institutional factors, (c) professional associations, and (d) personal characteristics. These factors were identified from a review of the literature as being influential to scholarly writing. Only the findings from one of these factors is considered in detail in this paper.

Publication counts. Supplementary data from the curriculum vitae supplied by each participant was used to assess which ones met the definition of publishing productivity, as determined by the number of refereed publications, including journal articles, book and monograph chapters, and books. Publications shown as "in press" were included in the total. Self-reported data about publications have been shown to be highly reliable (Creswell, 1985).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed inductively using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously. The researchers coded the transcribed interviews and analyzed the information for emerging themes. Data obtained from interviewees who did not meet

the criteria for publishing productivity were eliminated.

Findings

Characteristics of the Sample

The 18 participants in the study who met the definition of productivity share a number of characteristics. The majority (n=15) completed doctorates at research universities. Thirteen of the 18 participants are currently employed in senior-level faculty positions at research universities and the remaining are at doctorate-granting institutions. Most were affiliated with programs in higher education. Years in a faculty position ranged from 5 to 25 with a mean of 13.67 (SD=6.15).

Insert Table 1 About Here

Table 1 is used to display some indicators of the sample's level of publishing productivity. Members of the sample maintained an average yearly career productivity index of 2.21 (SD=.95) of all types of referred publications. The mean number of refereed journal articles and book or monograph chapters (M=26.78, SD=12.20) is greater than the mean (M=25.4) reported by Hunter (1986) for female scholars, but less than the mean (M=36) reported by Hunter and Kuh (1987) for a sample of male and female scholars. These comparisons support the argument that the members of the sample can be characterized as being highly productive scholarly writers.

Institutional Factors

Participants used a range of adjectives to describe the contribution of their universities to their publishing productivity. Only three participants described departmental environments that they characterized as being highly supportive of their scholarship. The remainder used adjectives that ranged from "hostile" to "null" to describe the work environments they experienced as faculty members. Isolation and lack of financial support for scholarship were the central elements of work environments that were considered hostile. The metaphor of "boot camp" was used by one participant to describe her experience as a new faculty member in the 1970s. She said, "It was kind of a Darwinian environment. Survival of the fittest kind of thing. If you survived it, you were good enough for the club. It was kind of a boot camp." "I was working myself to death and not getting any support," reported a third faculty member who began her academic career in the late 1980s.

A "null" environment that was neither supportive or unsupportive was the most typical description of the work environment first experienced by these academic women who later developed a substantial publication record. One woman described her treatment in her department as "benign neglect." Another participant who brought an established research agenda with her to her first faculty position in the early 1990s, described it this way: "They did not get in my way... They were supportive by not being unsupportive." "Nothing external to me has supported my

writing," said one. A fourth participant said, "By in large, I haven't done it with any institutional support except for leaves of absences."

None of the participants described formal institutional structures, such as workshops, that helped them to develop the research and writing skills necessary to publish. With one exception, the women in this study did not cite department chairs or deans as active agents supporting their writing and scholarship other than reinforcing the expectations required for tenure and promotion. One participant captured the viewpoint when she said of her department, "There were high expectations that you would have a research program, but they were unaware of what that took." She went on to say,

> You just kind of buckle-down and do your work. That is the ethic that I always had. Here's the job. Figure out how to write a lot. You were set to figure it out on your own. There wasn't that much help available to anyone.

Institutional Factors Contributing to Productivity

Despite a general tendency to down play the contribution of the institution, participants identified three elements of the institution as supportive of maintaining a high level of scholarly productivity. These were: the formal and informal institutional reward structure, work assignment, and opportunities for collegial exchange. These are described in detail in the following section.

Reward structure. Particularly early in their career, participants noted that the institutional reward structure played

a central role in their motivation to publish. Almost all of the women scholars noted that the desire to get promoted drove their initial commitment to research and writing. Salary was not mentioned as an important incentive for writing.

One participant reflected on the importance of the institutional expectations when she noted:

> I do think of writing as my job. It is what I do. It is what I am required to do. Even though I do it independently, if I did not write, I would not think that I was doing my job.

Virtually every participant commented that her writing productivity increased after she earned tenure because she then felt free to write about what interested her. Many voiced doubts about the heavy reliance on journal articles in promotion criteria.

In addition to formal expectations for scholarly writing reinforced by the reward structure, informal standards for productivity were reflected by the degree to other faculty in the department actively were engaged in research and writing. Several participants alluded to their departments as having a "writing culture." One participant described a "writing culture" as having the sense that "at the center, there was a high value in writing. That you were to be writing. That was in the air."

A number of participants mentioned the importance of departmental norms that supported the practice of routinely scheduling days or blocks of time for research and writing. One participant commented that the norms for behavior in her department were obstacles to her writing productivity:

> It was very hard to protect my time. The norm there was for faculty to be in their offices from eight to five. That is not a writing environment. I had to violate some norms to stay home to write. Nobody took me to task for that, but it was very clear to me that I was violating some norms. It wasn't a culture of scholarship.

Resources. Participants identified several examples of institutional support for research and writing. These included visibility or recognition for those doing research, institutional research grants, travel money to attend conferences and to give presentations or to collaborate on a research project, resources to hire graduate students to assist with data collection and analysis, opportunities for collaboration, and release time from teaching to do research. Travel money was the most common financial support cited.

Key administrators, such as department chairs, who articulated strong support for writing and scholarship were not always able to match this with resources to support scholarship. Heavy teaching and advising responsibilities were listed uniformly as inhibitors of scholarly writing, as were high expectations for service.

Collegial exchange. Female academics reported extensively on the contribution of relationship with peers to their productivity as writers, particularly with colleagues external to the institution. One participant reflected this sentiment clearly when she described what is often characterized as a "cosmopolitan orientation" (Gouldner, 1957). She said, "My greater identification

was with the people outside of the institution." A sense of professional isolation was identified as a strong inhibitor to scholarly publication.

A network of colleagues outside the department and institution, sometimes originating in relationships established during the doctoral program, was instrumental in developing an identity as a writer and scholar. These relationships were with both male and female colleagues. Such relationships were with colleagues who shared similar interests, exchanged manuscripts, gave advice and feedback, and promoted the importance of writing. One who noted a lack of support in her work environment said, "I would not have attempted to do some of the writing I did without the encouragement of my professional colleagues."

Participants emphasized the crucial role relationships with colleagues played in developing their skills in writing and publishing. One participant described a collaborative relationship with a female colleague as one where they "learned by doing." Participants often named a specific person as the one who taught them how to be strategic about publishing.

Contrary to how female academics are characterized in the literature, only two participants described relationships with students as being a significant element of their productivity. One of these said, "One thing that has supported my scholarship has been students. Although the results are indirect in terms of conference presentations and publications, it has certainly stimulated by day-to-day interest in scholarship." She described

finding a "synergy of ideas and shared interests." Another participant said, "My saving grace was students." She pointed to the lack of female colleagues as one of the reason relationships with students were so important to her. The majority of participants, however, reported little success in developing collaborative writing relationships with students, noting that shifting interests and responsibilities often interfered with the ability of graduate students to carry projects through to completion.

Conclusions

The women academics in this study consistently characterized their experiences in ways that suggest that they perceived that their publication productivity was established and sustained without significant support from their institution. Although few described work environments that they depicted as overtly hostile, the expression "I did it on my own" is a sentiment that many of the participants shared. The experiences they reported reflect a perception of an absence of support, rather than the sense that there were institutional barriers.

Despite this perception, participants' comments pointed to several institutional factors that contributed to their ability to be productive as scholarly writers. These were, first, a formal an institutional reward structure that placed a premium on scholarly publications. Second, a work assignment and climate that supports those who carve out time to maintain an active research and writing

agenda. Third, support for an active engagement in a collegial network external to the institution. Participants frequently referred to these three elements to explain whether the department where they worked could be characterized as having a "writing culture" or a "culture of scholarship."

Findings from this study of women academics with substantial publication records suggest that they perceive that factors that contribute to publishing productivity vary by career stage. Institutional factors were particularly influential early in their careers when the habit of writing and expectations for research and publication was first initiated. As they became established in their careers, the institution's main role in sustaining a publication record was to facilitate the dedication of time to scholarly research and writing by not imposing high expectations for teaching and service and by providing the resources that supported active engagement in a network of professional colleagues. This suggests that the connection between institutional location and publishing productivity is that the ability to commit time to scholarly research and writing reflects both individual interests and commitment and their work assignment which is shaped by institutional resources and its mission.

The participants' perception that institutional factors contributed little to their publishing productivity may reflect the primacy of collegial networks in sustaining a commitment to scholarly research and writing. Participants' comments indicated that while their initial motivation to publish was shaped by their

institutional reward structure, their commitment to their scholarship was sustained by the norms set through exchange with the scholarly community outside of their institution. Findings from this research seem to confirm Fox's (1983) hypothesis that while institutional resources may explain **how** scientists are able to maintain productivity, reinforcement from colleagues is **why** scientists continue to produce.

Although an extraordinary engagement in their work was evident in their descriptions of their work schedules, participants understandably did not speak at length about personal qualities and the role of personal agency in shaping the lifestyle that seemed to be necessary to support a long term commitment to scholarly research and writing. This research could be extended by exploring the experiences of highly productive academics in different disciplines and by comparing the commitment to scholarly writing before and after tenure of a group of men and women graduates from the same doctoral cohort group who move on to faculty careers in similar environments.

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Table 1:

Publication Productivity of the Sample

(n=18)

Number of publications	M	SD
Refereed journal articles	18.83	9.43
Book & monograph chapters	7.94	6.31
Books	3.61	2.93
Total refereed publications	30.39	13.61